The value of dietetics for the promotion of good health and longevity cannot be overemphasized. The value of food and diet as medicine in the treatment of diseases was fully known to the ancient medical authorities.

Modern scientists and nutritionists have also proven, through laboratory tests, that the proper adjustment of diet not only prevents and cures certain diseases, but may even help to prolong human life. Further, with a change of diet, it is quite possible to modify even the character of an individual.

Both the quality and the quantity of food play an important part in the well being of a person, as also one’s attitude towards the subject of food.

**Quality of food**

Food is classified into three categories - based upon the end-effect of the nutrients on our body - as Sattvika foods, Rajasika foods and Tamasika foods. The sattvika variety of foods are pure energy yielding, non stimulating and completely vegetarian. The rajasika foods are the high protein, energy yielding diets - including non-vegetarian foods. The tamasika type of foods are the stale, artificially preserved and flavoured foods, as also over-refined and processed foods, which lead to malnutrition.

Different foods also have a tendency to cause different symptoms to the body. Foods like eggplant increase body heat, while onions are found to have a cooling effect on the body.

The human being is really a herbivo-frugivorous animal. Recent experiments have established that a meat diet is unsuitable for human digestion, and that it causes more diseases than a mixed or purely vegetable or fruit diet. People who live off a low protein and non-flesh diet are found to have far greater endurance than those accustomed to the ordinary full flesh, high protein diet. A vegetarian diet is easily digestible, satisfactorily fulfills the average nutritional needs of an individual and forms the ideal diet for those leading a sedentary life.

**Types of nutrients**

From a bio-chemical viewpoint, there are five basic categories of nutrition that constitute the diet of a person - carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins and minerals. Carbohydrates such as sugar and starch provide the fuel upon which the body runs. Fat is essentially a storage form of fuel that can be burned when there is no ready source of carbohydrate available to the body.
Protein is the basic building block of the body and makes up the framework of its more rigid structures such as the cell walls, skin, bones, solid organs and blood vessels. Vitamins and minerals are the catalysts that prompt these compounds to interact efficiently.

The three basic nutrients - carbohydrate, fat and protein - are needed in comparatively larger quantities; they are the fuel and the building materials that are necessary for the body in bulk. The vitamins and minerals are, by contrast, analogous to the screws and bolts necessary for the construction and operation of the body.

In chemical terms, we may consider carbohydrate, fat and protein as the basic compounds out of which the body is composed. The daily requirements of the body for protein, fat and carbohydrate intakes are expressed in grams, while vitamins and minerals requirements are recorded in amounts that can be measured in milligrams – i.e one thousand times less.

**Composition of a balanced diet**

Most whole natural foods (with the exception of meat, which contains no carbohydrate) contain a balance of the three major nutrients as well as appropriate amounts of vitamins and minerals. A balanced diet of pure, light and nutritious food which is wholesome, easily digestible and pleasant to taste which suits a sedentary life and promotes a cool nature and quiet temperament.

The recommended composition of meals is somewhat as follows:

**Grains (30 %)**

Wheat is the king of cereals from a nutritive viewpoint and is also easily digestible. Wheat (including its bran) is good for energy and endurance, and contains plenty of proteins also. Rice contains only starch and can lead to obesity if eaten to the exclusion of other cereals. It is preferable to eat unpolished rice, as its husk and pigmented covering contains Vitamin B, fat and protein. Corn is good for the blood, having a cooling effect. Barley is easy to digest while oats are high in fat.

**Dairy Products (20 %)**

Milk is a complete food, and is highly recommended. Curd or yoghurt is cooling and very easy to digest. Butter takes more time to digest, while cheese - especially the processed variety - takes even more time to digest. Pure desi ghee is ideal. Organic milk products are superior to those derived from the use of antibiotics and hormones.

**Vegetables and Roots (25 %)**
These provide vitamins, iron and mineral matters, as also roughage. Some of the most beneficial are okra, spinach and brinjals. Among the roots, potatoes provide Vitamin B and C, calcium, phosphorus and iron. Carrots are rich in Vitamin A. The uncooked leaves of turnips, carrots and radish tops are very nutritious. 100 grams of raw vegetables provide as much nutrition as 400 grams of cooked vegetables.

**Fruits and Honey / Jaggery (20 %)**

All fruits are a good source of vitamins. Citrus and other fruits are recommended. Dry fruits such as dates, raisins, almonds, apricots and figs are rich in carbohydrates and vitamins. Avoid acidic, sour or unripe fruits. Honey and jaggery (or brown sugar) are a good source of carbohydrates and minerals. Avoid white sugar because it has lost all its nutritive elements due to processing. In fact, white sugar absorbs calcium from the body and may contribute to osteoporosis or similar ailments arising out of calcium deficiency.

**Nuts (5 %)**

Consuming a handful of nuts a day is advisable. Almonds, cashew & peanuts are good.

**Quantity of food**

One should know one’s own body and its particular food requirements. The same diet has different reactions on different persons because of the divergence in their individual digestive and assimilative capacities. Besides, what may be lacking in one individual need not be lacking in another - the diet for a person who is under-weight should not be the same as that for an obese individual. A fixed and standard diet with a specific number of calories is illogical, unscientific and, in fact, harmful to the body.

One should be sensitive to the capacity of one’s stomach. Moderation in diet is emphasized as the guiding principle i.e. to eat no more or no less than what is absolutely necessary to satisfy one’s appetite. As a general rule, half the stomach should be filled with solid food at each meal, one quarter of the stomach space is to be left for water and the balance quarter of stomach space should be left for gases, which are produced during the process of digestion. If the space is not left for the gases to work, they will press against the heart in an attempt to find a way out. Heart attacks have been observed to occur soon after meals, caused by improper eating.

Three principal meals in a day are appropriate. Breakfast at 8 a.m. may be followed by lunch at 1 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m. In the interval between any two meals, it is best to refrain from
eating. Fruit juice or a glass of lemon water may however be suitable at such times. Avoid heavy meals before sunrise or after sundown.

**Attitude to food**

It is very important that food should always be taken with a calm and quiet mind, and in a slow and attentive manner. Fear, anger and other disturbing feelings have a bad effect on the digestion. Food eaten when we are in an excited state of mind will not have the same beneficial effect, and in extreme cases, may even do us harm.

Food should be masticated well with the teeth, and then be allowed to mix thoroughly with the saliva, which contains several valuable juices that help in the proper assimilation of the food. If the meal is rushed, the food may take a long time to be digested, and sometimes the digestion remains incomplete.

Water or any other liquid should not be drunk while solid food is being eaten, as this dilutes the digestive juices and makes them less effective. Consequently, the process of digestion takes longer to complete. Drinks may be taken half and hour before or an hour after a meal without any ill effects on the digestive process.

**Foods To Avoid**

Avoid fried, roasted or re-heated food. Also, avoid excessive salt in the diet. Tomatoes and cucumber are acidic to the body and also difficult to digest. Strong spices are unhealthy as they bring a burning sensation to the internal membranes also making the mind restless and aggressive. Food that has been highly seasoned with onions and garlic also aggravates the nervous system.

Caffeine-based stimulants such as tea, coffee, cocoa are to be avoided while alcohol and other advanced nerve stimulants such as marijuana and hashish are prohibited due to their acutely adverse effects on the nervous system.
## Food And Tissue Nourishment Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tissues</th>
<th>Nourished in (time period)</th>
<th>Foods rich in these</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plasma</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>Fresh fruits and fruit juices e.g. Papaya, melon, strawberries, cherries, apricot, peaches etc., Tomatoes, Asparagus, Milk, Water, Shatavari</td>
<td>Wrinkle-free skin, Nourishment and sexual secretions in men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>Spinach, Beetroot, Carrot, Tomatoes, Pomegranate, Apple, Grapes, Red Meat, Broccoli, Dates and Figs, Folic Acid, Asparagus</td>
<td>Circulation and Oxygenation, Ability to grasp, memorize and remember Pink lips, nails, ears and nose tip, Good digestion and problem-free skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscles</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Egg, Meat, Beans (Rajma, Soyabean), High-protein diet, Pumpkin, Avocado, Banana, Physical exercise</td>
<td>Muscular body, Can pick up a lot of weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat</td>
<td>15 days</td>
<td>Ghee, Butter, Oil, Cheese,</td>
<td>Strong capacity for physical work, oily skin and hair, lubricated joints, no constipation, cold and cough ailments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone</td>
<td>21 days</td>
<td>Eggs, Milk, Sesame seeds, Nuts, Coconut, Radish, Banana, Sunlight</td>
<td>Strong bony build-up, good teeth, slow degeneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone marrow</td>
<td>25 days</td>
<td>Walnut, Almond, Coconut, Brahmi, Jatamanasi, Fish, Cod Liver oil,</td>
<td>Intelligence, full of compassion and love, Well-nourished, Can pick up more than their own body-weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproductive tissue</td>
<td>30 days</td>
<td>Saffron, Cardamom, Milk, Black Dal, Chicken, Gold, Silver, Ashwagandha, Shatavari</td>
<td>Attractive appearance with good features, Ojas, Teja on the face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>